

16 January 2008

## **European Group on Ethics adopts its opinion nr. 23 on ethical aspects of animal cloning for food supply**

In February 2007, following the announcement by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) concerning possible authorisation of food products derived from cloned cattle, pigs and goats on the market, President Barroso asked the European Group on Ethics of science and new technologies (EGE) to issue an Opinion on ethical implications of cloning animals for food supply.

At the same time, the European Food and Safety Agency (EFSA), was asked to produce an Opinion on food safety, animal health, and environmental implications of live cloned animals obtained through somatic cell nuclear transfer technique (SCNT), their offspring and the products obtained from them.

After several months of internal working meetings, expert hearings, a public consultation launched in the Europa web site (800 contributions received) and a round table with representatives from academia, industry, NGOs, civil society, International organisations and industry<sup>1</sup>, on January 16, 2007, the EGE has adopted its latest Opinion on ***ethical aspects of animal cloning for food supply***. The Group is aware of the EFSA draft Opinion and the FDA Report published the day before the adoption of the Opinion.

Considering the current level of suffering and health problems of surrogate dams and animal clones, the EGE has doubts as to whether cloning animals for food supply is ethically justified. Whether this applies also to progeny is open to further scientific research.

At present, the EGE does not see convincing arguments to justify the production of food from clones and their offspring<sup>2</sup>. If in the future food products derived from

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/european\\_group\\_ethics/activities/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/activities/index_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> The conclusion in this paragraph was dissented by K. Marczewski.

cloned animals were to be introduced to the European market, the EGE recommends that the following requirements are met:

*Food safety* - The safety of food products for human consumption as a pre-condition for their marketing must be guaranteed and scientific updates and follow up research into progeny should be carried out.

*Animal welfare and health* - In accordance with the Amsterdam Treaty (animals as sentient beings) and the Lisbon Treaty, additional requirements should be met in intensive animal breeding, with the aim of following the guidance on animal welfare provided by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), e.g. the five freedoms: from hunger, thirst and malnutrition; from fear and distress; from physical and thermal discomfort; from pain, injury and disease; and to express normal patterns of behaviour.

*Traceability* - Current EU legislation on food regarding traceability of animals and their food products should be enforced. It should be ensured that EU legislation provides for the ability to identify individual animals where necessary.

*Global trade* - The import of cloned animals, their offspring and materials derived from cloned animals (e.g. semen and food products) should be conditional on proper documentation, in particular with regard to traceability provisions and animal welfare.

In addition the EGE recommends that:

*Animal welfare* - Further studies and analyses on long-term animal welfare and health implications for clones and their offspring, as well as more comparative analyses with other assisted and traditional reproductive technologies in animal farming, should be carried out for a proper assessment of this issue, in line with EFSA draft opinion. The Commission should take initiatives to prepare a Code of Conduct on responsible farm animal breeding, including animal cloning.

*Farm animal biodiversity and sustainability* – The Commission should take proper measures to preserve the genetic heritage of farm animal species, for example by funding projects that aim to preserve domesticated breeds in Europe and to promote sustainable agriculture.

*Public participation* - Public debates should be promoted on the impact of farm animal cloning on agriculture and environment, on societal impact of increasing meat consumption and rearing of bovines, as well as on the fair distribution of food resources. The Commission should take a pro-active role in promoting public discussion on the use of animal cloning, and its potential implications, by financing a number of *ad hoc* initiatives aimed at promoting public debate on the marketing of food products derived from animal cloning.

*Public perception* - The Commission should launch a thematic Eurobarometer survey and qualitative studies on animal cloning for food supply, in order to collect indicators on public

perception concerning the introduction of such products to the food market as is being done in other countries.

*Labelling* – The EGE is aware of the technical difficulties of labelling products from offspring, nevertheless it recommends that the Commission takes the initiative to devise targeted procedures prior to the marketing of such food in the EU.

*Intellectual property issues* – It should be clarified whether the exclusion clauses in Directive 98/44/EC (Art. 6d) on patentability of biological inventions and the EPO rules (23 d) to animal cloning for food apply.

*Global trade and consumer's freedom* – The EGE is aware that import issues of food products derived from cloned animals, including compliance with World Trade Organisations provisions, may complicate the market situation, however, the EGE recommends that the Commission takes initiatives to ensure consumers' freedom and rights.

*Research* - Further research is needed, in particular basic research on animal cloning, as well as impact on human health, animal welfare for farmed species other than those covered by EFSA. Similarly, further ethical, legal and social implications of animal cloning for food supply as well as qualitative studies on public perception should be carried out.

The EGE Opinion has been issued to Commission President Barroso on 16.01.2008, the Opinion is accessible at [http://ec.europa.eu/european\\_group\\_ethics/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/index_en.htm)